

Meeting of the SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT TEAM held on 19 MAY 2008 AT 2.00 pm at the Museum School Room, Saffron Walden

Present: Councillor K L Eden – Chairman
Councillors R M Lemon, D J Morson (Uttlesford members); David Demery; David Haylock and David Laing (Museum Society)

Officers present: Maureen Evans, Rebecca Procter, Carolyn Wingfield

1 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Kenyon and Tony Watson.

2 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 **HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND APPLICATION**

Carolyn Wingfield provided a brief update regarding use of the Lottery Fund's publicity material. It was a condition of the grant that their logo should be displayed in a variety of ways, ranging from staff badges to construction boards on site. Officers had agreed a list of appropriate places for displaying the logo with members of the Museum Society, and a brief verbal report had been given to the Lottery Fund. It should be noted that all documentation for the project would need to show the Lottery Fund logo.

4 **MATCHING FUND APPLICATIONS**

Carolyn Wingfield circulated a schedule of funding applications made to date, indicating a current total of £502,224. David Laing noted that interest and gift aid would further accumulate.

There had been a setback in obtaining matching funding from the three main grant-giving bodies approached in the autumn. All three had turned down the applications. Feedback obtained indicated oversubscription as a major factor.

It was now necessary to move on, and four more foundations which could be approached had been identified. Applications for £50K landfill tax credits had been made to Biffa and Viridor (the latter a second application).

Business donors were also to be approached, and contact had been initiated with BAA and Ridgeons. There were also a number of other funds which it would be better to approach once the project had gained momentum. Maureen Evans intended to pursue the possibility of funding from the British and Foreign Bible Society, which owned Bell College.

Councillor Lemon suggested approaching the local Rotary Clubs as they were keen to support local causes and might be able to give a small grant.

Councillor Morson reported that in his experience on two Parish Councils, it was apparent that Viridor had ample funding to distribute, and should therefore be approached for the maximum possible. It was noted that Biffa had been nominated for a community recreation project award for its support of the skate park, and therefore could be amenable to further local causes at present.

The element of the funds needed for building and fitting-out was discussed. David Demery said that as staffing costs did not need to be available until after construction, the crucial sum needed for commencing the project was £1.2m. Carolyn Wingfield pointed out that the three project staff needed to start work before construction and had to be issued with three-year contracts, so the full amount of £1.7 million did need to be secured before the project started, to avoid any financial risk.

The timetable was discussed. Carolyn Wingfield said that whilst no deadline for starting the building work had been set, she would keep the Lottery Fund advised of the situation with grants and would try to gain a feel for any deadline. It was hoped to start work this year, otherwise inflation would adversely affect budgets. If the project were to slip further, it would become necessary to consider with the Lottery Fund whether the project should be cut in any way.

Discussion took place on the effect of the current economic climate on building costs. It was considered that enhanced competition would be unlikely to enable savings, although a clearer picture would emerge from the tendering process.

AGREED that tendering could start if matching funding of £100K of the outstanding £204,000 could be secured.

5 **SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY LTD**

David Laing gave a brief report. Everything was in place for the transfer required by the Lottery Grant. At the AGM on 8 August the Society would be asked to agree the handover of assets. The procedure would then be taken forward by the solicitors. He noted that the donation of the land by the District Council had been deferred. Carolyn Wingfield explained that this was due to the timing of council meetings once she had submitted her report. The heavy agenda for the next meeting of the full council had meant this item could not be considered on that occasion. For this reason, it had been deferred to the next council meeting on 22 July. However, since matching funding was not yet complete, this delay would not be a problem.

Councillor Lemon offered the Museum Society his support during his year as chairman of the District Council, and said he had chosen the Museum as one of his two charities. David Laing thanked him for this.

David Demery referred to the condition of the site itself, and said that road sweepings had not been cleared satisfactorily. He would pursue this matter.

6 **TIMETABLE**

Carolyn Wingfield said she would try to get a steer from the Lottery Fund representative regarding slippage if the money could not be obtained before October.

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Carolyn Wingfield said that helpful comments regarding the view of the Castle had been received from some residents on the far side of the Common, and that she had taken their details.

An exchange of information with the curator of Bishop's Stortford museum had proved useful in considering issues for managing the castle ruins, since the central location of castle sites in both towns was a common factor. Both sites were on the Monuments at Risk Register.

Councillor Eden said the tennis courts site was owned by Saffron Walden Town Council, and that they would be likely to endorse possibilities for change of use, perhaps for retail development. This would give the Museum more options, and would represent a planning gain. The question arose as to whether the Town Council had taken a lease from the Braybrooke Estate, which had historically owned the land. Councillor Eden said he would seek clarification on this point.

David Haylock questioned the efficacy of directions to the Museum, as he considered the location of signs to be insufficient.

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting to be Monday 21 July at 2 pm in the Museum School Room.